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LETTER  
OF

Hon. Reverdy Johnson,

*On the subject of Ex-Governor Bradford's Claim for  
Indemnity.*

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BALTIMORE, May 4th, 1874.

*To the Committee of War Claims.*

GENTLEMEN :

The memorial of Gov. A. W. Bradford, now before you, states very clearly the grounds upon which he seeks the relief he solicits. But that paper having been prepared by himself, with a delicacy which belongs to him, does not contain a statement of the services rendered by him to the cause of the Union, during the late civil war, in his capacity of Governor of Maryland. It is proper, however, I think, that these services should be brought to the attention of the Committee, because, in my judgment, they very materially support his claim. It was in consequence of those services that he became personally obnoxious to the insurgents, and to all who sympathized with them in this State.

I beg leave, therefore, as his friend, but not as his counsel, (for I do not hold that relation towards him,) to present, as concisely as I can, a detail of these services.

The Governor was nominated to the office of governor in August, 1861, and almost at once entered into an active can-

vass, and conducted it with distinguished ability. His competitor was the late General Benjamin C. Howard, a gentleman of fine talents, and possessing great popularity. The result of the contest, however, was, that at the election in November following, Bradford succeeded by a majority exceeding 31,000, a greater majority than any gubernatorial candidate had ever before received in Maryland.

It would unnecessarily lengthen this communication were I to give extracts from his inaugural message delivered before the Legislature in January, 1862, (a copy of which accompanies this letter.) The committee will see from this inaugural with what zeal and devotion the Governor adhered to the cause of the Union, and that his resolution was to support it by all the means in his power; a resolution which he faithfully carried out.

A few months after his inauguration the Governor presided at a mass meeting in Baltimore, and made an address, distinguished for its power, and replete with the strongest appeals to the patriotism of our people. And when afterwards, President Lincoln issued his proclamation, calling for 300,000 additional volunteers to support the Government, the Governor resorted to every means in his power by pen and speech to induce the men of Maryland to take care that the quota of the State should be properly supplied. Indeed, in anticipation of the information of what would be her quota, he published the following appeal to her loyal men:

STATE OF MARYLAND—EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

ANNAPOLIS, *July 4th, 1862.*

The call which has been made by the President of the United States, for an additional force of three hundred thousand men, must command a prompt response from every loyal heart. Whilst the Southern leaders—the champions of a pretended popular revolution—with all their boasted unity of purpose, can fill their rebel ranks only at the point of the bayonet, by the exercise of a most odious conscription, the cause that we uphold tolerates no such tyranny. Its appeals are in behalf of a country and a Constitution too dearly loved and prized, to require a force of any kind stronger than that affection to marshal the hosts of its defenders.

Hitherto, these defenders have even anticipated such appeals, and outnumbered their requirements. It was necessary to suspend the recruiting; and now, when at the instance of the loyal States, the Government renews its appeal to the patriotism of the people, and it is repeated and emphasized by the voice of our bleeding countrymen on so many battle-fields, who can doubt the response that it will receive.

Men of Maryland, I look to you with confidence to be among the foremost in responding to this call. There are reasons why you should be. You are, as it

were, the natural body-guard of the Capital of the Nation. If this diabolical rebellion ever makes another forward movement, its first step will be upon your soil. In your very midst there lurks a comparatively small, but still influential plotting, determined, treasonable element, watching the first opportunity to pilot the rebellious host into your midst, and to give up to the desolations of war your present peaceful firesides. Though such a probability may be remote, it behooves you to be ready for all contingencies, and prepared by an ample and organized force for the open rebel and the secret traitor.

The one great paramount object which the patriotic everywhere have in view, and which, with us in Maryland, should, and I am sure does, outweigh and nearly extinguish all other considerations, is the restoration of the Union. Whilst among those professing the same object, there may be found in some places a comparatively small class, anxious to combine with it other and ulterior views of a selfish and sinister character, we have in our own State, I fear, a still more dangerous class. Secret sympathizers with secession, who, by the exaggerated importance they constantly seek to attach to these factious movements, and their affected fear of these ulterior purposes, are, in fact, seeking only by such means to undermine the great cause we have at heart, and to paralyze the arm we are prepared to raise in its defence.

Against these insidious attempts let us be on our guard; let us bear in mind that the great impending peril by which all other perils are eclipsed, is this rebellion; that it is to be put down; put down by force of arms, at whatever cost and regardless of all other considerations. That once subdued, the Nation thereby rescued, and the Union restored, we need have no fear for its future preservation, or the renovated vigor of our existing Constitution. The mighty masses of our population having themselves achieved this success, and mindful of the experience of the past, will be sure to provide for our security in the future; whilst the very last whose influence need be feared in this National regeneration, will be the sectional agitator and demagogue, who will serve hereafter only as a beacon to warn us from the breakers where we have been so nearly wrecked.

Let the loyal men of Maryland then, remembering only the great stake they have in the Union, and that their loyal position subjects them to the first shock of its assailants, prepare to take a corresponding position in the front rank of its defenders. Let no collateral considerations distract their councils. Let no pretended caution against comparatively imaginary dangers, ingeniously magnified and whispered in our ears by rebel sympathizers, suspend for a moment our determined purpose to restore the union, and crush the rebellion, the only danger that now threatens it. Conscript levies and hired substitutes can never stand before volunteers in such a cause. The crisis is at hand, one more effective blow and the rebellion must crumble. Let Maryland, then, if the blood of her revolutionary line of old, still courses through the veins of her sons, answer, and answer promptly to the call of the President, and let our bleeding brethren on recent battle fields, be cheered by the assurance that on the next, these sons will be beside them.

I make this appeal to the people of the State in advance of any notice I have yet received of the actual quota required of them for the new force now ordered into service. Whenever I am advised more particularly upon this point, their attention will be called to the details of the subject and all the information given that may be of interest or importance.

By the Governor,

A. W. BRADFORD.

WILLIAM B. HILL, Secretary of State.

The Committee will see by this appeal, what is to be seen in every act of the Governor during his term of office, how zealous and untiring were his efforts in the cause of the Union.

The Governor, also, in his first annual message urgently recommended to the Legislature to pass an act providing for a bounty to all the men of Maryland who might volunteer, whether white or black, and upon this recommendation the Legislature passed a law granting \$300 to each volunteer; and the Governor, solicitous that this bounty should not be misappropriated, arranged a method for its faithful payment to the soldiers, which I believe effectually protected them against being defrauded. These arrangements, were, in substance, that he had books prepared and forwarded to the authorities of each county—those authorities under the law having to disburse the bounty fund—and sent circulars to each county, describing the duties to be performed, and the manner of performing them, and cautioning the authorities how to avoid the perpetration of fraud, especially in the case of the colored soldiers. And he also, with the same view, instructed the county authorities to appoint agents themselves for the distribution of the fund, and promised that the agents would be paid by the State.

These measures, it is believed, answered the purpose for which they were designed, the protection of the soldier in the matter of his bounty.

Beside the efforts heretofore referred to he made others which were most important to the success of the government in the war, especially in regard to the support to be received from Maryland.

The slavery agitation was necessarily calculated to diminish to some extent the desire of our people at that time to support the Government. By the Constitution of the State in force when the Governor was elected, the Legislature was prohibited from passing any law abolishing the relation of Master and Slave. Notwithstanding views to the contrary, the Governor was of the opinion (and in that I think he was right,) that there was nothing in this provision or in the nature of the subject to prevent the people from repealing it by adopting a new organic law. And being decidedly convinced that the provision should be abrogated, in his first annual message he recommended that the Legislature should pass a law authorizing the people to elect members to a convention to consider the subject. Such a law was passed, and afterwards a Convention chosen by the people, in May, 1864, formed a new Constitution which, among other things, abolished slavery. This

Constitution was, as the law required, submitted to the people, and was approved by them

There was, however, supposed to be some irregularity or illegality in the manner of taking the votes upon the Constitution, and particularly in the provision which gave the soldiers in their several regiments and companies the right to vote. Without the vote of these soldiers the Constitution would have been negatived, and the strongest efforts were made by the friends of the institution of slavery to induce the Governor to throw out these votes, but they were made in vain, and slavery ceased to exist in Maryland by Constitutional enactment long before it was abolished by the United States.

It is not too much to say that the measure in our State owed its existence, mainly if not entirely, to the exertions of Governor Bradford. The details of all that was done upon the subject are to be found in the 3d volume debates Maryland Constitutional Convention 1864, pages 1903 to 1926, and as strong evidence of the approbation of the Union men of the State, I refer the committee to an extract from an editorial in the Baltimore American of November 1, 1864, the day on which the new Constitution went into effect. That editorial was as follows :

—————“ But there was one that we shall hold in eternal remembrance ; one who stood by us under Providence, as firm as the everlasting rock-ribbed hills. Through night and storm this watchful pilot remained at his post ; true to his instincts as a man of unflinching honor, of unbending rectitude, of unswerving patriotism. Read his masterly ‘opinion’ and see how neatly he turns the weapon of his adversaries. Badgered and bullied day after day, as he was by the enemies of the best interests of the State, he never for an instant lost sight of his inner promptings as a true gentleman ; but kindly and patiently met their objections with that legal acumen, and that intellectual force for which he is so highly distinguished. He meets argument with argument ; he handles with skill and judgment the weapons of right reason ; he combats and disposes of every point urged in opposition to his course : his decision is acceptable, because it is not that of a partizan politician, but of an upright judge, a careful and profound scholar, and a man rigidly and sternly conscientious. Never was any man more beset by the enemies of freedom to be unfaithful to his trust than the Governor of this State ; but amid the reviling and persecution of his assailants, amid bribes and threats, he was true to duty ; true to his State ; true to facts as they occurred ; true to law and the testimony ; true to the Christian sentiment of the age.

“ When Maryland receives the benefits which will be conferred upon her by the operation of the new Constitution, there will be no prouder name for her to cherish than that of its defender, Augustus W. Bradford.”

I think the Committee will agree with me that the preceding details clearly establish the fact that Bradford during his

entire official term, with regard to the late unfortunate civil war, as well as in regard to the institution of slavery, was true to what he esteemed his duty. That that duty was such as he believed it to be, is now I have no doubt the opinion of the entire country. His efforts served greatly to keep our State from falling into the heresy of secession, and in bringing into the field soldiers without number to support the Union. His recommendation that slavery should be abolished, and its abolition in '64 consequent upon that recommendation, entitles him to the approval of mankind, and he now, I doubt not, has the approval of the thousands in his own State, who at the time assailed him with acrimonious bitterness. The Committee will pardon me for saying in conclusion, that not to indemnify such a faithful public servant for the destruction of his property by those who were seeking to disrupt the Union, and who were influenced as they said by the destruction of the private dwelling of the Governor of Virginia, (an act abhorrent to civilized warfare) as well as by the fact of his untiring and effectual efforts to maintain the Union and preserve the political integrity of the State, can find no justification, I believe, in any law human or divine.

I remain with high regard,

Your obedient servant,

REVERDY JOHNSON.

*To the Hon. Wm. Lawrence, Chairman, and others.*

(COPY.)







Letter of Mr. Reind.

